U. S. Customs Service
Partnership and Counter Terrorism Initiatives

In January 2002, the United States Customs Service launched the Container Security Initiative (CSI) to prevent global containerized cargo from being exploited by terrorists. This initiative will enhance security of sea cargo which is a vital link in global trade. Some 200 million sea cargo containers move annually among the world's top seaports, and nearly 50 percent of the value of all U.S. imports arrive via sea.

The Container Security Initiative consists of four core elements. (1) use of automated information to identify and target high-risk containers; (2) pre-screen containers identified as high-risk before they arrive at U.S. ports; (3) use of detection technology to pre-screen high-risk containers; and (4) use of smarter, tamper proof containers.

CSI involves placing U.S. Customs inspectors at major foreign seaports to pre-screen cargo containers before they are laden on vessels. U.S. Customs officials, working with their foreign counterparts, may detect potential WMD in U.S. bound containers. Since nearly 70 percent of all U.S. bound sea containers pass through 20 major seaports around the globe, Customs is initially focusing on these 20 ports. Currently, 16 of the world's top 20 seaports representing over two-thirds of all of the containers shipped to U.S. seaports have joined U.S. Customs in CSI to protect global commerce from the terrorist threat.

The U.S. Customs Service has introduced another anti-terrorism initiative called "Customs Trade Partnerships Against Terrorism" (C-TPAT), which engages the trade community in a cooperative relationship with Customs.

Under the C-TPAT initiative, Customs will work with importers, carriers, brokers and other industry sectors emphasizing a seamless security conscious environment throughout the entire commercial process. By providing a forum in which the business community and Customs can exchange anti-terrorism ideas, concepts and information, both the government and business community will increase the security of the entire commercial process from manufacture through transportation and importation to ultimate distribution. This program underscores the importance of employing best business practices and enhanced security measures to eliminate the trade's vulnerability to terrorist actions. To date, we have over 1,200 participants in C-TPAT.

To better address the seaport security needs, the U.S. Customs Service has promulgated regulations requiring the submission of cargo declaration manifest information to Customs 24 hours prior to lading. This data will give Customs the opportunity to prescreen cargo at its earliest point in the supply chain.

These initiatives will better address seaport security and security of the supply chain. Through these initiatives, the U.S. Customs Service will be able to balance the anti-terrorism enforcement and trade facilitation missions. If you would like more information on these initiatives, please contact Ms. Carol Makolin, U. S. Customs Service, Office of Field Operations, at 202-927-0716.